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/For an historical account of Caucasia, see cat. 116, pp. 266-306; for maps showing the political boundaries of various periods, see cat. 116 pp. 311-358./

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GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING

INTRODUCTION

174 The Caucasus was known to classical antiquity from the earliest times on. Not only in early Greek history, but in the epic and legendary traditions of Greekdom the Caucasus plays a great role. It was the home of Prometheus, who against the wish of the gods betrayed the secret of fire to man, and who, for this transgression, was cruelly punished by the gods in the Caucasus Mountains. The Argonauts sailed to the land of Colchis on the Caucasian shores of the so-called "Hospitable Sea," the Pontos Euxeinos, to take the Golden Fleece. It was through those early contacts of the Greeks or their Mediterranean predecessors with the Caucasian world that they became acquainted with wine and viniculture and many other amenities previously unknown to the West. The Caucasus was a fabulous land, a land of promise and attraction, to which not only the Greeks succumbed, as is well known from history. The contacts of classical antiquity with the Caucasus were maintained and strengthened through the many Greek colonies established between the 8th and 4th centuries B. C., all along the coast of the Black Sea. The cities and ports which these Greek merchants and travelers built still exist today,

974 the majority of them with their names only slightly altered. The populations of these ancient Greek colonies were usually multinational, within which the Greek element still today has a certain percentage and represents a cultural zone.

103 The seafaring traveler from the West sees these mountains slowly emerging from the sea, their white peaks rising to the skies, as the ship advances to the East until it drops anchor in one of the ports of Colchis. They were from the oldest times known to the Greeks and thus to the entire West under the name of Kaukasos, from which comes the Latin Caucasus, taken over by all European languages. This name is not of Caucasian origin - the Caucasians proper have no general term for their home mountains - but it may be well derived, as Joseph Markwart showed about thirty years ago, from the ancient Iranian Krou-kasis ("ice-covered," "ice resplendent"). While several peoples speaking Iranian languages dwell today in the Caucasus Mountains, it seems that at those remote times Iranians were permanently living not in the Caucasus, but in the nearby areas southeast, east, and north of it. This is parallel with the name of the Black Sea, whose Greek name mentioned above is a euphemistic alteration of an earlier Greek form Pontos Axeinos, itself being a popular etymology of the original ancient Iranian term axšaena "black." The present-day

172 continued its migration southeastward as far
171 as Noyon (Noyin)-Ola in Mongolia, and finally into northern China. Thus we see a pre-historic cultural connection between the Caucasus and north central Asia and the Far East; this connection took place in the Bronze Age, probably the later Bronze Age, and consisted at least in a cultural transmission over a distance rarely observed during any historical period down to the beginning of the modern
•174 age. In mythical and legendary traditions,
101 peoples of the Caucasus were known to the ancient Mesopotamians, the Assyro-Babylonians, and the Hebrews of the Old Testament as the Gimirru or the Gomer. This name survives well into classical antiquity, when there are repeated mentions of the Kimmerioi as living on the northern and northeastern shores of the Black Sea, and after whom the Strait of Kerch and Taman was called the Kimmerian (or Cimmerian) Bosporus. It is quite possible that this same name is found again in that of Crimea. Peoples living in or near the Caucasus were the Togarma and the Gog and Magog of the Old Testament.

174 The lands of the Caucasus in a larger sense remained without any literature or historiography of their own until Christian times, i.e., until the time of their own conversion to Christianity in the 4th and 5th centuries. But before this time they were in the immediate

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.174 sphere of interest of expanding political units in their vicinity. We do not know exactly how far the armies of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires penetrated the plateaus of the Van area to the north and northeast; but the later Assyrian empire, under Sargon II (721-705 B.C.), conquered the mighty realm of Urartu, which comprised all of Armenia, except for Lake Sevan. Later, the Medes and Persians were very much interested in the Caucasus, but only under the Akhaemenians did Trans-Caucasia become a part of their empire. But the conquest of the Akhaemenian empire by Alexander the Great included only Armenia. Although Armenia, as well as the other Trans-Caucasian lands, remained de facto independent, they were de jure provinces or vassal states of the Roman (and later the Byzantine) empire. The Caucasus was drawn into all subsequent political and cultural developments of the Mediterranean as well as of the Near and Middle Eastern world, in which it occupied a very important position in almost all respects.

While the Caucasus in late pre-historic and early historic times played only a marginal role, apparently remaining scriptless and thus deprived of a literary expression of its own, it seems to have always been a center of mining and metal work. The Caucasus may well be considered the oldest center of metallurgy in the entire Western civilization, i.e.,

-174 the ancient Semitic and Caucaso-Anatolo-Mediterranean world. This is evidenced by data in classical literature as well as in the Old Testament; thus, the prophet Ezekiel speaks of the Yavan, Thubal and Meshekh (Mäšäk), who furnished the markets of Israel with metal (27:13). The Yavan are the Ionian Greeks, the Thubal are the Tibarenoi and the Meshekh the Mushku (Musku) of the Akkadians and the Moskhoi ( ) of classical antiquity (cf. e.g. Strabon, books XI and XII). The name of the latter survives in Georgia in that of the Meskhi-Surami range. Greek writers mention the peoples of the Khalybes (: Xenophon: Anabasis, V, 5, 1) and Mossynoikoi (: Xenophon, ibid., V, 4, 30-34, and Pseudo-Aristotle) as iron workers, and in Greek, metals are named after them: : "steel", and : "brass". German "Messing". In view of this, the fact that so far in Caucasian lands or in Eastern Anatolia no mines left by these ancient metal-working peoples have been found, can be explained only by the lack of systematic archeological research in that domain, as has been mentioned above. These mines are explicitly mentioned by the ancient writers. Thus, Strabon speaks of the mines of the Khaldaioi of his time who, as he states, were in ancient times called Khalybes; at the present, Strabon says, they are mining iron, but in former times it was

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.174 also silver (XII, 3, 19). In connection with the Iberes, the K'art'velians, he mentions gold miñes, and thinks that because of the working of gold mines also by the Western Iberians (Iberes hesperioi) in the Iberian Peninsula, both nations, however far distant, had the same name (XI, 2, 19). Terms for metals and different types of metal work as found in the historical languages of the Semitic, Indo-European, and other groups in that entire area are not of homogeneous origin, but are, as a rule, loan words taken over at an earlier period from a language or languages of earlier inhabitants of the eastern parts of Anatolia and the Caucasus or regions immediately adjacent to Caucasian lands. So far, no historical traces of these ancient languages, which once had furnished the languages of their neighbors or conquerors with so many cultural expressions, have been found; but their relatives or descendants survive in a number of language families and languages which were spoken in that vast Mediterranean area from the Iron Gate in the Caucasus, on the Caspian Basin, to the Columns of Hercules, on the Iberian peninsula, and most of which were superseded at the dawn of history by the Semitic and Indo-European languages of the conquerors: languages such as Basque in the Pyrenees, Ligurian and Rhaetian in the Alps, Etruscan in Italy, the many pre-Greek languages in Greece, on the Aegean Islands, and

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.174 in Anatolia, and the Caucasian languages (and perhaps a few others too) are the remainders of these ancient cultural inhabitants of the Ancient West. It is not fortuitous that the two relic groups of that ancient language system survive to this day precisely in mountains, in the Pyrenees and the Caucasus.

Mountains have been chosen time and again by retreating peoples as a refuge in which to escape domination, absorption, or even annihilation. In historical times in the West this was the case with the Ligurians and Rhaetians, who survived longest in the Alps; and in the East, with all the peoples of the Caucasus whom we consider Caucasians proper, or the Caucasian aborigines. These peoples escaped absorption only to the extent that they lived in the mountains, or at least near them and under their immediate protection. Such movements to the mountains took place repeatedly at different intervals and different historical periods. One of those movements is that of the As or Oset'i, who were dispersed Alans from the north of the Black Sea-Caspian steppes; they did not participate in one of the great migratory movements of their people, which led them, along with their Germanic allies, to the Rhine, Gaul, Spain, and finally to North Africa. Another was that of the Avars, who may have received their name from the remainder of the Mongolian

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74 Avars, who in the middle of the sixth century A. D. marched through the Iron Gate of Derbent, coming from Central Asia and heading westward with the goal of the conquest of the Roman Empire. In the Caucasus these Avars then assimilated with their neighbors, such as the Khaidak, west and northwest of Derbent, whose Mongolian or partly Mongolian ancestry shows in their vocabulary. We may also mention the Turkic Karachai and Balkarians, the only Turkic people all of whom actually live in the mountains, where they were compelled to retreat by force majeure; and similarly, the Kumyk in the northeast of Dagestan, only some of whom live in the mountains. The languages of the two latter groups have so far not been absorbed by any of the neighboring Caucasian languages.

But by no means all of those who had sought protection in or near the mountains survived; we need only think of the many peoples who were absorbed by the later Armenians --the Alarodians, the Khalybes, the Khaldaioi; or of the Caucasian Albanians, the Alvank' ( ), who lived in Karabakh and Shirvan, and disappeared shortly after the Arab conquest; or of the majority of the Northwest-Caucasian peoples who in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries had to yield to Russian pressure.

This accounts for the extraordinary, almost legendary richness and variety of

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.174 nationalities and languages in this small area, a variety further increased by the coexistence of ethnical traditions, religions, and other cultural features. Abu-'l-Feda calls the Caucasus the "Mountain of the languages." Strabon, whose mother was a Georgian, in describing the Black Sea coast of the Caucasus and its cities and towns, speaks of the cities of Dioskurias (its modern name being Sukhumi, an old Greek colony dating, like the neighboring Pityus*, from the early Ionian colonization phase of the 8th-7th century B.C.). Dioskurias, Strabon says, is located at the beginning of the isthmus between the Black Sea and the Caspian, and is an important port and market place for all the neighboring Caucasian peoples, seventy of whom meet here-some people say even 300, but Strabon adds that these are people who do not particularly care for reality. All these people speak different languages, since they live scattered and unblended in independence and ferocity (Strabon. Geography, Book 11, Chap. 16). A short time later, Pliny, in speaking of Pompey's campaigns (derogatorily called by Strabon a "robbery war," op. cit., Book 11, Chap. 6.), stated that Pompey needed 130 interpreters for his enterprise.

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* , Georgian Biciunta, Russified as Pitsunda, at the estuary of the Bzipi, south of Gagry.

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C. 162 563 G. 105 Caucasia -- Colchis in a larger sense -- have for a long time been the home of one of the oldest nations of the Caucasus, the K'art'velians. This group has played a foremost role in the history of Caucasian culture. Their leading nationality is that of the Georgians, who call themselves K'art'veli. They were the first to be converted to Christianity, in the 4th century A. D., by Tsminda Nino, who came there from the south, from Armenia. With this event, Georgian history and literature begins. It may well be assumed that there was some culture in pre-Christian times which was dependent on that of Persia, as indicated by traces of an earlier K'art'velian fire cult as the expression of Zarathustrism. This was probably brought in by the Persians after their conquest of Trans-Caucasia, during the Akhaemenian dynasty.

C. G. [174]

C. 563 G. 105 Like Armenia, Georgia always resisted Islamic domination; although politically not always successful, it never became an Islamic country. This explains the old and intimate cultural, religious, and political ties with Byzantium and later with Russia as the substitute and continuation of the East-Roman theocracy. This guaranteed Georgia's cultural, religious, and political survival.

This region of Trans-Caucasia differs in many, if not all, respects from the vast

178 after the oil industry had begun to exploit the
177 wells of Apsheron, natural gas was also made use of, with the result that after 1887, the regular religious services at the temple were discontinued. Above the entrance to the fire temple there is a Sanskrit inscription set into the wall, although upside down; however, the inscription does not contain any data as to the erection of the temple or of the particular place in India with which it was intimately connected.
101 The fire worshippers of Surakhany were called
177 Multani, and though no literary sources on this name have come to my attention, this is a hint as to the origin of these fire worshippers, who may have come from the city of Multan on the Chenab, a tributary of the Indus in present-day Pakistan. Evidently, this city was the home of the Parsi founders of that trading colony in or near Baku. These Multānī could hardly be called a national minority in the Caucasus; they are to be considered rather as temporary residents, unlike the Greeks of the ancient Ionian colonies.

Conclusion. Ethnical History

• 174 Thus, we see the older inhabitants of the Caucasus living in the higher regions of the Great Caucasus and in Dagestan and the southern and southwestern parts of Trans-Caucasia. These peoples have been living in the Caucasus since pre-historic times. In many instances, we can distinguish among them early and more

recent layers of population. The older peoples all show an intimate connection with the south, the plateaus of Anatolia and Iran, and the adjacent plains of Mesopotamia. Somewhat more recent in this Trans Caucasian world are the Iranians and the Armenians, however, they still are old as compared with the Turkic invaders of the recent past, as we must designate the Azerbaidjanians.

A foreign conquest in this region does not always result in the retreat or pushing back of the indigenous peoples into the high mountains. As a consequence of the Russian conquest, one hundred years ago, some of the Caucasian mountain peoples were forced, in varying proportions, to leave the mountains and descend into the lower valleys of their rivers, or even into the adjacent North Caucasian plains, and to become agricultural settlers. This was not easy, and was done in response to both persuasion and coercion. Finally, the majority of the Oset'i, a great number of the Chechen and Ingushes (the latter always much feared by the Russians), and last but not least, the Cherkess and Kabarda who did not emigrate, became peaceful peasants also. This was the only way in which the Tsarist government could stop the incessant guerrilla warfare in the mountains and the resistance of the Caucasians, which had continued even after the defeat of Shamil in 1865, in the form of continual robberies, and attacks on peasants, transports, or

177 even military convoys. By diverting these people to agriculture, order was finally established, resistance on any sort of wide or dangerous level was broken; thus the conditions for the ultimate incorporation of those national groups into the large Russian family were created.

167 174 Since Caucasian studies are still very much in an incipient stage, it is not possible to trace the different waves in which the historical and present-day Caucasian peoples came to their habitats. Where historical sources are missing, the chief help comes from linguistics.

The Eastern Slavs, coming from the north, were the last wave of immigrants and conquerors (18th to 20th centuries). They were preceded by the Turkic-speaking peoples (11th-14th centuries), who in turn came later than the Alanoi-Aorsoi, the forebears of the Oset'i (1st-3rd centuries A. D.). Events prior to that time are unclear. It is impossible to say whether groups of the Skythai, or Sauromatai (6th-1st centuries B. C.) went to the Caucasus, though this might be indicated by a remark of Strabon's (Book XI, chapter 3). And with this, we are in pre-Christian times.

In the south, history goes much farther back, but only insofar as it deals with one of the ancient Semitic or Anatolian (Hittite, etc.) cultures. Therefore, there are enormous gaps for the Caucasus proper, and the peoples who migrated there from the south. The campaigns of Alexander the Great bypassed the Caucasus,

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174 so that direct historical information is lacking about this period as well as all the preceding centuries. But during those times, the present day and historically-known Trans-Caucasian peoples had already been in the area for a long time. Thus, we can distinguish five historical waves: 1) the Russian; 2) the Turkic, coming from Turkestan and Central Asia via Iran; those were the so-called Oghuz Turks, from whom the Saldjuqs, the Osmars, and the Azerbaidjanians stem; 3) the Arabic, less an ethnic than a political wave, like the Mongolians in the 1220s; 4) the Iranian, probably consisting of different phases which, if named after political units, could be called Sasanian, Akhaemenian and pre-Akhaemenian; 5) that of the Indo-European Armenians (Hajk), who superseded the Proto-Armenians, at least a strong group of whom descended from Urartu. This early fifth wave occurred at a time when the K'art'velians, or at least Proto-K'art'velians, had long since been at home in the regions they occupy today, the southwestern triangle of Trans-Caucasia, called by Strabon
("country of the Moskhoi," the Meshekh [Masak] of the Old Testament). At this early Proto-Armenian period, in the early centuries of the second millenium B. C., the ancestors of many of the northwestern and northeastern Caucasian peoples were already living in, or at least near, their present-day dwelling places--perhaps not in the inaccessible, high alpine valleys of the Caucasus, but in the

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167 fertile plains at the foot of the mountains. But
174 the periods referred to above as those of the 4th and 5th waves, present us with an enormous number of riddles which can only be tackled (if they ever are) with the help of linguistics and archaeology.

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A brief explanation for each one of these facts may be in place here. (1) That our tables should show the lowest cephalic indices for the Indo-European populations of the Caucasus is to be expected, for the pure Indo-European stock was dolichocephalic. The Scythians, Alans and early Ossetes till the ninth century A. D. were undoubtedly dolichocephalic.[9] (2) That the highest brachycephalism should be found by the Georgians and Lesghians offers no serious problem, for it is certain from other anthropometric data, that at least the Georgians and practically all Lesghians form an anthropological unit. (3) To explain the near-mesocephaly and the (a) variability of certain ethnic groups in the Caucasus is still a difficult unsolved problem. About 50% of the population of the Caucasus is brachycephalic and only 18% dolichocephalic, while the neighbouring South (ancient Asia Minor especially) is overwhelmingly brachycephalic too. It is quite probable that the mesocephalic tendency of the Mingrelians (81.4), Imeretes (80.9 and 81.4), Khevsurs (80.7), Chechens (80.4), Adyghe (81.4) and Abasians (80.9) can be explained to a large extent[10] by a struggle between two unequal forces, dolichocephalic waves from the North and brachycephalic waves from the South. The variability of the indices of the Cherkess tribes (78.5, 82.1, 83, 83.6, 83.8, 84.5) may perhaps be due to the fact that some groups have been subject to the dolichocephalizing waves to a lesser degree than others. The main dolichocephalic waves seem to be especially, though not exclusively, of Aryan origin. Contact with the Indo-Europeans from the earliest times cannot be denied. The Caucasus may very well have been a corridor between Europe and Asia Minor for the Aryan migrations. R. Forrer (*Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, LXXVI, p. 247) is of the opinion that the Aryans, coming from the North, passed through the Caucasus as early as the first half of the third millenium B. C. Kretschmer (*Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung*, LV, p. 97) and B. Hrozny (*Archiv Orientální*, III, p. 294) similarly maintain that the Indo-Europeans used the Caucasus as their route to the Near East, however, somewhat later than Forrer's conjecture, about 2200 B. C. Other well-known scholars of the Indo-European question, e. g., H. Frankfort (*Studies in Early Pottery of the Near East*, I, p. 158), E. Meyer (*Sitzungsberichte der preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 1925, p. 249), F. Schachermeyr (*Wanderungen und Ausbreitung der Indo-Germanen im Mittelmeergebiet*, Hirt-Festschrift, Heidelberg, 1936, I, pp. 235, 239)[11] believe that the Caucasus was undoubtedly used during the Indo-European migrations. Hybridization between the brachycephalic Caucasians and the dolichocephals must have begun quite early, as some of the prehistorical graves discovered in central Caucasus containing male dolichocephalic skulls and female

[9] C. S. Coon, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

[10] We wish to emphasize the words "to large extent." By no means do we wish to explain the complicated problem entirely by one factor alone. There was, for example, contact with the Turco-Mongols, *north* of the Caucasus, who were *brachycephalic*. Traces of this contact are noticeable especially in the Cherkess. Cf. R. Bleichsteiner, "Die Völker des Kaukasus," *Ausen-Berichte*, V (1944), Heft 22, pp. 4 f. For example, there are also the Cro-Magnon race and the East Mediterranean dolichocephals who must be considered. Cf. R. Bleichsteiner, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

[11] Cf. F. Hančar, *Urgeschichte Kaukasiens*, pp. 355 f., who cites the above-mentioned authoris.

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brachycephalic remains testify. In other words, from these finds it is evident that crossing was not uncommon already during the Bronze Age.[12] Very important racially was the contact with the Cimmerians and Scythian-Sarmatian populations, who for centuries lived in the Caucasus, till in the fourth century B. C. they were driven southward to Subartu.[13] Some present-day Ossetine-speaking tribes are not of Indo-European origin while practically all have a strong non-Indo-European strain.[14]

According to C. S. Coon, "The Caucasic-speaking peoples as a whole, from an anthropometric standpoint, represent a blend between a local Alpine racial nucleus and several kinds of Mediterraneans. The Georgians and the Lesghians are the most Alpine, the Cherkesses the least so. The facial dimensions preclude, in most groups, the presence of a long-faced Irano-Afgan element in any quantity; except among the Cherkesses, the head size, with mean lengths in the low 180's, limits the possible Mediterranean elements to the smaller-headed varieties. These are apparently both Danubian and Cappodocian; there is too much true facial Dinaricism for the Danubian to be the only factor, and too much blondism and nasal concavity for the Cappadocian."[15]

§ 3. LINGUISTICS

Perhaps nowhere in the world will one find such an intricate mosaic of languages as in the Caucasus. Today there are about 40 different Caucasian languages, and formerly the number must have been much greater. Strabo (63 B.C.—A.D. 26) speaks of seventy languages along the coast of the Black Sea and as far as Albania, that is, in Azerbaijan- and Armenian-speaking countries of today. Pliny speaks of 300 different languages at Dioscurias which necessitated 80 interpreters. Abulfeda calls the Caucasus "The Mountain of Tongues" and Thomas Artsruni, the Armenian historian of the tenth century, writes that "72 different nations inhabit the Caucasus."

These languages fall into three sharply distinct groups: the Northwestern, the Northeastern, and the Southern. (See pp. 1—4.)

1. Phonetics

The vowel system of all three groups, but especially of the Northwestern group, is very poorly developed. In Abkhazian there are only two basic vowels *a* and *ə*.[16] The preponderance of consonants over vowels is less marked in the Northeastern languages: the Chechen, Avaro-Andi, and Lak languages have the five *a, e, i, o, u,* vowels, and some languages, for example Kurin and Aghulian, have the equivalent of something between the German umlauts *ä, ö, ü,* and *ə, o, u*.[17] The vowel system of the Southern group is the richest of the three.

[12] R. Bleichsteiner, "Kaukasische Völker," *Ebert's Reallexicon*, VI, p. 213.
[13] R. Bleichsteiner, "Die Völker des Kaukasus," *Asien-Berichte*, V (1941), No. 22, p. 1.
[14] A. Baschmakoff, *op. cit.*, p. 32. See his analysis of the racial problem, *op. cit.*, pp. 28—38.
[15] C. S. Coon, *op. cit.*, pp. 631 f.
[16] R. Bleichsteiner, "Die kaukasische Sprachgruppe," *Anthropos*, XXXII (1937), p. 65.
Dirr assigns four basic vowels to Abkhazian. *Einführung in das Studium der kaukasischen Sprachen*, p. 24.

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are also typically pastoral nomadic. The South Caucasians, of course, possess considerably less pastoral nomadic traits than do our North Caucasians.

2. Temporal and Causal Designation

That the marriage and family customary laws of the various North Caucasian mountain tribes should be so distinctly pastoral nomadic demands an explanation. When, why and how have these *adats* acquired such a character?

A final answer to this problem is impossible without first having solved the problem of race, original home, and many other related problems regarding the *individual* tribes, such as their early migrations, cultural contacts, and their history in general. Moreover, not only is Caucasology still in its infancy, but the Caucasus is itself one of the most culturally complicated areas in the world. Immediately south of the Caucasus we have the great ancient cultural centres (Ancient Near East!); immediately north of the Caucasus we have the steppes, the scene of many an early migration; finally, the Caucasus itself was used during these migrations as a corridor and sometimes as a place of refuge. In an attempt to determine the causal and temporal relations of what we termed "pastoral nomadic" it is very essential not to assume more than our present knowledge of the Caucasus will allow us. We wish therefore only to throw some light upon the problem and to offer a partial solution.

But what do we know about the origin, the original home, the early migrations, cultural contacts, and history of the North Caucasian peoples and tribes? Very little indeed! We know only that the North Caucasian mountaineers lived elsewhere formerly and that they would never have settled in their present isolated mountain villages if they had not been forced to do so by their enemies. We also know that these migrations began long before the ancient Greek and Latin writes became aware of their existence.

Fortunately, prehistory offers us some useful information toward the solution of our problem. The abundance of finds in North Caucasus, Southeastern Europe and Southwestern Asia leave no doubt about this region being the home of a highly-developed pastoral nomadic civilization. It is here that the original home of the Indo-Europeans most likely is to be sought, and, as Vambéry pointed out almost seventy-five years ago,[33] the original home of the Altai nomads may have extended up to the Caspian Sea, the immediate vicinity of North Caucasus.

The steppes immediately north of the Caucasus was a stage on which various pastoral peoples repeatedly appeared, acted their parts, and then disappeared behind the scenes, giving way to other nomadic hordes more powerful than themselves.[34] The powerful nomadic Scythians (c. 800—300 B.C.)[35] were

[33] *Die primitive Kultur des turko-tatarischen Völker*, p. 14.

[34] F. Hančar, "Die Beile aus Kuban in der Wiener Sammlung kaukasischer Altertümer," *Wiener Prähistorische Zeitschrift*, XXI (1934), pp. 12 ff.; Hančar, "Kaukasus-Luristan," *Eurasia Septentrionalis Antiqua*, 1934, Minns volume, pp. 47—112.
W. Schmidt, *Rassen und Völker*, II, pp. 174—196.

[35] Cf. E. H. Minns, *Scythians and Greeks*, Cambridge, 1913.
M. I. Rostovtzeff, *Iranians and Greeks in South Russia*, Oxford, 1922.

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the first nomads to establish themselves in the Caucasus, after having forced the Cimmerians (c. 1000 B.C.) into the background. The Scythians were predominantly a pastoral people, while the tribes they subjected were agriculturalists. Then we see new waves of Indo-Europeans, the Sarmatians, sweep over the Scythian country (c. 300 B.C.—A.D. 200); we see the Maeotes, Sindae, Sauromatians, etc. submitting to the newcomers.

This contact with the nomadic civilization continued up to our own times. To recall some of the history of this region—in the first century B.C. Crimea and the northern coasts of the Black and Azov Sea belonged to the Roman Empire. It was in this region that the Goths appeared. In the fourth century the Huns became the masters of the region north of the Caucasus. In the sixth century the Khazars,[36] Avars,[37] and the Bulgars appeared in North Caucasus; in the ninth century we meet the Magyars there; in the eleventh century the Kumans,[38] and in the thirteenth and fourteenth century the Mongols, driving the inhabitants of the Caucasus higher and higher into the mountains. In the fifteenth century the Turks conquered Crimea, and the Georgian kings were made tributary to the Mongols.

A glance at our ethnographical map of the Caucasus will suffice to convince us that the situation today is essentially the same: today the North Caucasians live in very close contact with peoples who, originally if not any longer, possessed a typically nomadic culture. The Mountain Tartars (Balkarians) are most probably descendents of the Khazars or Volga-Bulgars. The Karakaitaghs seem to be turkized Mongols. The Nogai are descendents of the Golden Horde. And besides these originally Asiatic nomads we find in the Caucasus such peoples as the Kalmucks, Kumyks, etc.

This constant contact with nomadic societies perhaps from the very beginning of pastoral nomadism—certainly since the Scythian period almost 3000 years ago—throws light upon the intricate problem: Why, how and when did the North Caucasian marriage and family customary laws become so pastoral nomadic? This contact, although not sufficient to *solve* the problem, can and actually does shed considerable light upon the *adats* of the North Caucasians.

But it is not only the contact we must consider but the actual similarity of the family organization. We shall therefore briefly describe the ancient Indo-European family and then the common features of the Altai society. Physical anthropology has shown that the Caucasians have mixed (racially) with nomadic peoples coming from the North;[39] linguistics proclaims the same

[36] The rulers, if not all Khazars, were Turks.

[37] The Avars have no connection with the Leghians bearing the same name. The Avars seem to be proto-Mongols, and therefore neither Turks nor true Caucasians.

[38] The Kumans are also known as the Kypchaks, or, as the Russians sometimes call them, the Polovtsy.

[39] The Ossetes, for example, especially certain tribes, have a strong Caucasian strain. Many centuries ago some Ossetine groups have been actually Georgianized.

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in regard to their languages;[40] cultural anthropology, as our study clearly shows, must admit a very strong cultural connection between the North Caucasians and the various nomadic peoples with whom they have been in contact.

Although there is still much controversy connected with the complicated Indo-European problem, there is almost complete harmony when the marriage and family customary laws are being described.[41] E. Hermann[42] and O. Schrader[43] are no doubt responsible for this harmony.

The first remarkable fact about the Indo-European society is the essential absence of totemistic and mother-right practices.[44] Indo-European social life (and, we ought add, religion and economy) centred round (1) the joint-family and (2) especially its male members. Although a distinction was drawn between a biological and an undivided family, the biological family was of little significance except in connection with the undivided family to which it belonged. All property belonged to the joint-family, at the head of which was the patriarch. He enjoyed the *patria potestas* in the strict sense of the word. His wife (or wives, as the case may be) was subject to him in all things. Juridically speaking, her condition and that of all female members of the family hardly differed from that of little children. Women had no part in public affairs, no part in sacrifice. In fact, women were hardly better off than slaves. Inheritance rights were reserved for the male members of the family; the first-born had very special rights. Purity of blood of all members of the joint-family was greatly insisted upon. This seems to have been the main reason why a woman was generally punished with death for a serious offense.[45] This was also most probably the reason for the custom of placing a new-born child on the ground and inviting the father to pick it up as a sign that he recognized it as his own. The girls of the family had no freedom of choice in mating; they were either captured, or, as was generally the case, they were sold off, so to speak, to the highest bidder. The bride price consisted mainly in cattle. The main matrimonial impediments were those of consanguinity and disparity of social rank. The marriage was, of course, patrilocal. The chief marriage ceremonies were those of the triple encircling of the fireplace and the bridal procession (uxorem ducere, γυναῖκα ἄγεσθαι). Virginity of the bride was very highly esteemed. The chief purpose of marriage

[40] We need but recall such important words as *aul, kalym, adat*, etc. The language of the Ossetes contains many Caucasianisms; on the other hand, the Caucasian languages clearly show Indo-European contact.

[41] Compare, for example, the description of the Indo-European family organization as presented in Dr. Wolfgang Philipp's *Weiberherrschaft oder Mutterrecht* (Ost-Europa Verlag, Königsberg and Berlin, 1942), a Nazi publication, with that of Prof. W. Koppers, "Die Indogermanenfrage im Lichte der historischen Völkerkunde," *Anthropos*, XXX (1935), No. 1—2, pp. 8—11; or of Alphons Nehring, "Studien zur indogermanischen Kultur und Urheimat," *Wiener Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte und Linguistik*, IV (1936), pp. 167—181.

[42] "Die Eheformen der Urindogermanen," *Nachrichten von der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaft in Göttingen, Berlin*, 1914; also "Die Eheformen der Urindogermanen," *Forschungen und Fortschritte*, X (1934), p. 233.

[43] *Reallexikon der indogermanischen Altertumskunde*, Berlin, 1929, 2 volumes.

[44] W. Koppers, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

[45] Men involved in sex offenses were generally not punished.

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was the procreation of children, but especially of sons, who would one day become the performers of the sacred rites connected with ancestor worship. The cult for the departed was connected with the cult of the fireplace and was looked upon as the most sacred duty of the individual and of the family. Since the members of the same sib were descendents of the same ancestors, they were bound to one another in life and in death. This solidarity explains the frequency of family feuds, for blood-revenge was considered a very sacred duty. Polygyny was relatively common; polyandry, however, was taboo. The proof of virginity, the levirate, and the regulations regarding divorce and many other matters are very similar to those still in practice among the Ossetes of the Caucasus. It is indeed worthy of note that the Ossetine *adats* differ but slightly from the customary laws of their ancestors, while, as we have observed throughout the present study, the North Caucasians, especially the Cherkess, the Abkhaz, and the Ingushi differ but little from their neighbours, the Ossetes.[46]

The contact with the Indo-Europeans, especially with the Ossetes and their ancestors, must have been very important. We need but think of the powerful Scythians and then, later on, of the Alans who made their presence felt as far east as China and as far west as Spain. Many of the customs, especially of the Cherkess, Abkhaz, and Ingushi have certainly been borrowed from the Ossetes: the many legends about ancient heroes, especially the so-called Nart-stories, the many a godlet now worshipped by the North Caucasian are certainly of Indo-European origin.

If we now compare the Turco-Mongolian society with that of the North Caucasians and ancient Indo-Europeans we shall find a striking similarity in the family organizations of the three groups.[47] To point out a few of the more

[46] Among other practices of the ancient Indo-Europeans might be mentioned child-marriages, the *couvade*, the obligation of the bride to keep silence, the custom of veiling and covering the bride's face, mother-in-law inheritance, etc. See especially E. Hermann, "Die Eheformen der Urindogermanen," *Nachrichten der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*, pp. 39—62. We have based our description of the ancient Indo-European family on: Koppers, *op. cit.*, pp. 8—11; A. Nehring, *l. c.*; O. Schrader, *op. cit., passim*; E. Hermann, *op. cit., passim*; W. Philippi, *op. cit.*, pp. 17—45.

The ancient Slavs countenanced polygamy, a custom that continued to the tenth century A. D. Polygyny, however, was a privilege of the rich. The impediment of consanguinity and of disparity of social rank were strictly insisted upon. Girls would be married off against their wills. We also find the *couvade* among the ancient Slavs. A wife was acquired either by purchase or capture. A distinction between a joint-family (*rodovaja or bolšaja semja*) and the individual (*semejskaja or malaja semja*) was made, with a patriarch (*starosta or starešina*) at the head. It is also interesting to note that the same concept of a household is found in Russia as in North Caucasia, namely "fireplace." Blood-feuds, bloodwite, the disadvantageous position of the female sex, the "*patria potestas*" and many other features of the Slavic family life very closely resemble the Caucasian society. Ancestor worship centred round the fireplace and the male head of the joint-family was the family-priest. Vestiges of the cult are still to be found in Ukraine (E. Ellnett, *Historic Origin and Social Development of Family Life in Russia*, pp. 2 ff.). For more about the Slavic family organization see Zdenko Vinski, *Die südslavische Grossfamilie in ihrer Beziehung zum asiatischen Grossraum*. Many of these elements are still found among the Armenians, Persians, Kurds, etc.

[47] See Koppers, *op. cit.*, p. 15; A. Nehring, *op. cit.*, pp. 169—173. As W. Schmidt pointed out more than 20 years ago in his *Völker und Kulturen*, elements of the pastoral nomadic civilization are also found among the Hamito-Semitic peoples.

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essential parallels—characteristic of the Turco-Mongolian family are: the almost complete absence of mother-right and totemistic practices, the emphasis placed on the joint-family and the male members, special rights for the first-born son, importance of the male head of the family and the *patria potestas*, the disadvantageous position of the female sex, blood-feuds, exogamy, the *kalym*, which is usually paid in live-stock, the dread of incest, the severe penalties for sexual offenses, fireplace ceremony at weddings, the high esteem for the bride's virginity, the unusual craving for male children, the importance of the bridal procession, etc.

There is also a religious connection between the North Caucasians, the Indo-Europeans, and the Turco-Mongols, a connection that confirms our claim of the existence of a social connection between the three groups. It is not only the *similarity* of the religions of the three groups that we must keep in mind but also the intimate connection, the *organic* connection, between the nomadic social and religious forms. The solidarity which exists among the members of a sib, the great longing for male children, blood-feuds, the levirate, the *patria potestas*, the wedding custom of walking around the fireplace, and many other practices are fundamentally connected with ancestor worship and cult for the dead. Ancestor worship is one of the essential features of the religion of the Indo-Europeans, the Turco-Mongols, and the North Caucasians. Moreover, among all three groups ancestor worship is linked up with the worship of the fireplace. Another very essential part of the pastoral nomadic religion was the custom of sacrificing horses. W. Koppers has shown the great similarity between the horse-sacrifices of the Indo-European and Altai peoples;[48] R. Bleichsteiner proved beyond question the existence of the practice throughout the highlands of Caucasia.[49] Horse-sacrifices among the Indo-Europeans and the North Caucasians are certainly of Inner Asiatic origin.

Thus we see that even though the North Caucasians are not pastoral nomadic in the economic sense—the economy of the steppes is impossible in the mountains, especially in the unfertile valleys of the Caucasus—they are pastoral nomadic in their social organization. *A connection between the North Caucasian society and that of Inner Asia is beyond question.*

3. Vestiges of More Ancient Cultures In the Marriage and Family Customary Laws of the North Caucasians

As is only natural, the deeper we delve into the history of the marriage and family *adats* the more obscure the history becomes.

First of all there are the so-called mother-right vestiges which we must consider. It is interesting to note that the intensity of these vestiges among the three different groups of Caucasians (Northwestern, Northeastern, and Southern)

[48] W. Koppers, *op. cit.*, pp. 12 f, 18—22. See also W. Koppers, "Pferdeopfer und Pferdekult der Indogermanen," *Wiener Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte und Linguistik*, IV (1936), pp. 280—421.

[49] "Rossweihe und Pferderennen im Totenkult der kaukasischen Völker," *Wiener Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte und Linguistik*, IV (1936), pp. 412—495.

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a further development of this stage with the avunculate as a link between matriarchy and patriarchy."[1] Although the modern Soviet ethnologist is very cautious about what he terms "matriarchal," it is the universality of matriarchy that must be rejected as unfounded.

Linguists, especially of the Marr School, have pointed out other vestiges of mother-right in the Caucasus, thus confirming our ethnological argument.[2]

Prehistory, too might be able to offer some valuable data, but unfortunately the prehistorian has no way of establishing a connection between his discoveries and the culture of any North Caucasian people. Nevertheless, we can use the prehistorical data at least as a negative argument: the prehistorical discoveries do not exclude the existence of an older, more or less strong mother-right influence. On the contrary, the finds confirm such an opinion. The Copper Age discoveries of the Nalchik, Kuban, and the Kuban-Terek stages point to a society with a matriarchal sib organization.[3]

In other words, we cannot deny the existence of so-called mother-right vestiges, but compared to the numerous typically pastoral nomadic traits in the marriage and family customary laws of the North Caucasians they are quite rare. Nevertheless, the mother-right vestiges are sufficient in number to be a good indication that the family organization was much more matriarchal prior to the influences from Inner Asia than afterwards.[4]

We may ask ourselves the following two important questions: Why are the northwestern marriage and family *adats* the most "pastoral nomadic," the southern the least so, while the northeastern occupy a middle position? Why should the number of so-called mother-right traits be found in the three groups precisely in the reverse order? Caucasology is still too young to allow anyone to venture upon a final and complete solution. Here too we are able to offer only a partial solution.

The NORTHWESTERN CAUCASIANS. The true origin of the Cherkess is uncertain. It seems that at one time they were a powerful pastoral people, occupying a vast area, the entire North Caucasian foreland and a large sector of southeastern Europe. The Cherkess legends frequently refer to the steppes, to customs and usages of a distinctly steppe culture.[5] Later on their relations with the various nomadic peoples in this region, especially with the Scythians, Sarmatians, Alans—not to mention the more recent relations with the Ossetes and Turco-Mongols—were by far closer than were those of the other Caucasians. This hypothetical origin and economic life of the Cherkess

[1] Cf. M. O. Kosven, "Avunkulat," SE, 1948, No. 1, pp. 1—46. Also the following by the same author: "Perežitki matriarchata u narodov Kavkaza," SE, 1936, No. 4—5, pp. 211 ff.; *Matriarchat. Istorija Problemy*, Izkatel'stvo akademii nauk SSSR, Moskva-Leningrad, 1948, 224 pages; "Ob archaičnych materialach po etnografii SSSR," SE, 1936, No. 1, pp. 132—135. See also H. P. Dyrenkova, "Perežitki materinskago roda u altajskich tjurkov," SE, 1937, No. 4, pp. 18—45.

[2] See Table 4.

[3] It is interesting to note that the last two stages of the Caucasian Copper Age (the Kuban and the Kuban-Terek stage) begin to show a distinct rise of male importance through leadership in trade, religion, metallurgy, and cattle-breeding.

[4] R. Bleichsteiner, "Kaukasische Völker," *Reallexikon der Vorgeschichte*, VI, p. 253.

[5] [Cf. cat. 116, pp. 199 f.--Analyst]

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and the contact with pastoral nomads is certainly a good explanation for the fact that the Cherkess marriage and family are the most pastoral nomadic of all North Caucasians.

The origin of the Abkhaz is a veritable mystery. Baschmakoff's conjecture that they came from Anatolia and that only later on, some time in the first millenium B. C., were Cherkessized in their common struggle against powerful Colchis, is indeed possible, but unfortunately there is very little evidence to support this theory.[72] In any case, we must admit that the Cherkess have exerted a very great influence on the Abkhaz.

The NORTHEASTERN CAUCASIANS. The original home of the Chechens and the Lesghians is also uncertain. It seems, however, that both the Chechens and the Lesghians came from the South rather than from the North. According to A. Dirr the brachycephalic Caucasians migrated from the South,[73] and, as we have seen in our general introduction,[74] the Lesghians are among the most brachycephalic peoples of all Caucasus. Moreover, the traditions of the Chechens and the Lesghians favour a southern origin. It is quite probable that some Georgian tribes, after themselves having been driven into the lowlands of Southern Caucasia from their original home somewhere in Asia Minor, forced the Northeasterners into the mountains who were eventually forced to settle on the northern slopes of the Caucasus.

If we accept the hypothesis of a southern origin, the fact that the Northeasterners possess by far less pastoral traits and more mother-right vestiges in their marriage and family customs than do the Northwesterners becomes at once much more intelligeable: on the one hand their contact with the Asiatic pastoral cultures was shorter and less intense than was that of the Northwesterners living north of the mountain range in the lowlands; on the other hand their proximity to Asia Minor and their close connection with the South Caucasians subjected them more to mother-right influences.

What we have just said about the Northeasterners holds even more for the SOUTHERNERS: the pastoral nomadic influences were the remotest, shortest, and weakest among them, whereas their contact with the civilizations of Asia Minor was the most intense.

The great problem, which future fieldwork and intensive study and cooperation of scholars interested in the various fields of Caucasology alone will solve, is to discover the aspect of the marriage and family laws of the North Caucasians prior to the changes brought about by pastoral nomadism. Perhaps the new lively interest of the Soviet scholars in the ethnogenesis of the peoples of the U.S.S.R. will contribute not a little toward the solution of the problem. The problem must, of course, be approached *systematically*, considering each tribe *individually* and avoiding as much as possible such general expressions as

[72] A. Baschmakoff, *Cinquante siècles d'évolution ethnique autour de la mer Noire*, p. 13. It is indeed striking that the Abkhaz language occupies a middle position between the Northwestern and Southern languages, and similarly between the Northwestern and Northeastern languages.

[73] A. Baschmakoff, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

[74] *Supra*, p. 9.

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MAP IV

Peoples of Ancient Caucasus

After A. Sanders, *Kaukasien*, pag. 23